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ABSTRACT

Despite the persistent possibility that foreign languages and international studies may become lost in the current federal policy of fiscal restraint, the immediate public policy context for these areas is guardedly optimistic. Recent years have produced increased media attention, growing public support, and professional unity and organization. These factors have translated into improved and new policies, increased legislation, and major policy changes in the states. The 98th Congress has produced increased funding for Soviet and East European research and training, grants for library foreign language acquisitions, funds for international diplomacy and conflict resolution research, and teacher training support. While foreign languages are a stepchild in the legislation, previously they were simply absent. Several initiatives either were introduced too late or they languished in the legislature, but they will be reintroduced. In the most recent budget, although foreign languages were again zero-funded, support for strengthening their status exists. The challenge is for the profession to sustain its efforts to protect existing programs and funding and to keep the current favorable public attitude toward language study alive. (MSE)

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STATE AND FEDERAL INITIATIVE IN SUPPORT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Everyone has their favorite "Good news, bad news" story. Mine is the one about the two good ole boys sitting around the Village Square discussing whether or not there is baseball in heaven.

Let me suggest the bad news. first. In assessing a prognosis for future national policies, one might conclude that you need a crystal ball that registers only the single word - deficit (with a capital D). The danger is that foreign languages, international studies, exchanges, and, indeed, education itself, will get lost in the current obsession of policy-makers with the deficit and budget reductions. The challenge that languages face in the next few years is that they may once again be ignored. In the public mind and in the policy process, the MX may misplace the M.A.; the deficit discredit the doctorate; and the economy enervate education. Whether the news is good or bad depends on how this challenge is addressed and whether recent successes can be maintained.

The good news is that the immediate public policy context in which we are functioning can still be characterized as "guardedly optimistic." Some exciting things have happened with regard to education in general and language studies in particular. The last four years have produced increased media attention; growing public support; and most importantly, professional unity and organization. These factors have translated into improved and new policies; increased legislation; and major policy changes in the states.

First, there has been a general revival in language study. Enrollments are up considerably. For example, the State of Virginia has more students studying foreign languages now than at any time since World War II. The Modern Language Association reports that higher education enrollments have increased in all languages except Hebrew, Portuguese, and the classics. Chinese and Japanese continue to grow like topsey, and Russian, German, French, Italian and Spanish have made notable gains. Seventy colleges and universities, last year, reinstituted language requirements for admission or graduation (and that will have a trickle-down effect.)

Secondly, the language profession has moved to encourage communicative competence and develop proficiency-based standards. ACTFL and ETS have already put in place a series of oral proficiency tests based on a revised version of the FSI scale for the commonly taught languages. These tests allow us to tell students with some exactitude, what we can and cannot do, and what they have or have not done. Given Washington's penchant of jargon, the policy community has begun to talk in terms of the need for a "Common Metric" in language study. (I suppose this will allow us to "interface" in a more synergistic fashion.)

Third, according to the former Secretary of Education, 165 State-level task forces have been created to examine education in all fifty states. Most of these task forces address foreign languages. Eleven states have already introduced legislation to upgrade language requirements. In Florida, for example, the state is providing incentive funds for foreign languages in the elementary schools, awards for outstanding high school students, student performance standards, and requirements for admission to the state universities. New York is leading the way in adopting an action plan for global education. State aid will be available to school districts based on foreign language enrollments, all candidates for a regents diploma must pass a proficiency examination, and, by 1992, all students must have studied a foreign language by grade 9. To some, this suggests that the "new federalism" is working. And it may be. The danger we must guard against in this congress is that reduced federal funding and support would make these state programs more image than substance.

Nationally, the stage has been set for improved language study and facilities by over three dozen national commission and taskforce reports. The numbers vary depending upon who you talk to. The New York Times says there are 26; the former Secretary of Education talked about over one hundred; and a friend of ours in Congress (and we all know they are not given to hyperbole) speaks of hundreds. Almost all of the ones we have identified either implicitly or explicitly address the issue of global awareness and language study.

These studies range from A Nation at Risk, the report of The National Commission on Excellence in Education, which concluded that "we have been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral, educational disarmament;" to the Carnegie Foundation study which declares, "today's curriculum barely reflects the global view," to the new Secretary of Education, William Bennett's study which insists that "demonstrable proficiency in a foreign language and the ability to view that language is an avenue to another culture" is essential to a college education;" to the 436 page, Beyond Growth: The Next Stage in Language Area Studies conducted for the Department of Defense.

From a policy perspective, there can be little doubt that these reports, the state activities and the increase in public attention have assisted in creating a positive mood and a genuine sense of urgency among policy-makers toward strengthening education and language study. And this prompted a number of very important legislative initiatives in the last congress.

Last year, an election year, the appropriation for education was $17.6 billion, a $2 billion increase over by 84.

For the second year in a row, international education and foreign language programs were zero founded in the budget request, and, for the second year in a row, Congress responded with an increase to $32.05 Million and two new programs - The Soviet and East European Research and Training Program and the Congress-Bundestag Exchange Program - were funded at $4.8 Million and $2.5 Million respectively.

In addition to increased funding, some very significant new programs also came out of the ninety-eight Congress. The Library Services and Construction Act amendments included a new Title V providing grants of up to $15,000 to State and Local public libraries to purchase foreign language materials and a new Title VI providing grants of up to $25,000 to public libraries for literacy programs.

Also, the Department of Defense Authorization Bill created a new U.S. Institute of Peace actually funded at $4 Million, to provide fellowships to individuals and grants to universities and research groups to promote the study of international diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Finally, Public Law 98-377, The Education and Economic Security Act, was signed by the President on August 11. The final statute looks very different from the small, $80 Million Math/Science bill that started out in the House initially. The law now contains eigth titles, including one on equal access for religious groups and one on asbestos hazard abatement. While Title VI, Excellence in Education Programs, and Title VII, Magnet School Assistance, are important to us, the heart of the bill is Title II, which provides assistance for teacher training and instruction in Math, Science, Computer training and Foreign Languages. The continuing resolution actually contained $100 Million for this title for this year and the Education Department is currently moving to create the grant procedures to have the money in the field by June.

Languages are a stepchild in this legislation, but that's Okay. Originally they weren't in it at all. Essentially, at the State and Local level, Foreign Language instruction and computer learning get what's left over after the schools have trained sufficient Math and Science teachers. (In truth, this means there will be little or no real funding for languages in the schools.)

At the post-secondary level, "critical" foreign languages compete with math and science to create cooperative programs for improving student performance. Finally, under the Secretary's discretionary programs, there are specific critical foreign language grants and grants for nationally significant projects.

Of equal importance is what didn't happen in the 98th Congress. A new bill to provide scholarships for undergraduates from developing countries was introduced at the eleventh hour.

It had support from both the majority leader and the minority leader in the House and bipartisan support in the Senate, so it almost slipped through. In the end, its short life was extinguished in a conference committee.

The American Defense Education Act, (son of NDEA), with its very strong provisions for foreign language education came to the floor of the House in the final days. When it began to attract every election year issue from school prayer to busing to animal safety, it was tabled by its friends rather than risk its future.

As many of you know, the Foreign Language for National Security Act, providing $50 Million for languages at all educational levels, passed the House last February with a better than two to one margin. Despite our best efforts, this bill languished in the Senate Subcommittee for seven months and finally gave up the ghost.

I mention these three bills because some version of all of them will come up again in the 99th Congress, and because they are all bills to which the language community is seriously committed. In fact, the idea has already been reintroduced as S.117 and H.R. 650 to provide grants to local education agencies and for teacher training in Math, Science and Foreign Languages. Unlike the Education for Economic Security Act, in this bill languages are an equal with Math and Science. The scholarship program for developing countries has also been reintroduced as S. 542 and H.R. 1340, and last week it was rolled into broader legislation to authorize funds for the State Department. And it is my understanding, that the Foreign Language Assistance for National Security Act will be re-introduced shortly. The caveat is, while they have been re-introduced in the 99th Congress, any new spending bill, even one as modest as the Foreign Language bill, is going to encounter very rough sledding.

The mood of the 99th Congress is unquestionably one of fiscal restraint. Financial issues such as the deficit, defense spending and tax simplification are likely to dominate the entire life of this congress. Illustrative of this, the Administration's FY86 budget officially went to Congress in February and has pretty well tied that August body in knots ever since. When the budget was introduced, we identified 34 areas of concern to languages and international education.

The premier program of concern to languages, Title VI, International Education and Foreign Language Studies, has once again been zero funded, as have the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Library Services (not just the new titles including languages, but the entire package of federal assistance to public libraries) and the U.S. Institute of Peace. Additionally, the National Endowment for the Humanities, a major supporter of language research, would have its budget reduced by $13 Million.

Congressman Panetta and Senator Dodd have introduced a joint resolution (H. Cong. Res. 104 and S. Con. Res. 35), similar to one they introduced last year, indicating it is the sense of the Congress that Foreign Language and International Studies funding should not be reduced. It is indicative of the mood of this congress, however, that last year's resolution said that programs should not be reduced, but should be increased. This year's resolution says nothing about increases.

For Title VI, at least, the two previous attempts at eliminating that program did actually produce slight funding increases. Fipse also survived one attempt at elimination. The fate of the U.S. Institute of Peace, however, should be very much in doubt. This is not to suggest that any of these programs are secure. A fourteen seat shift in the House favoring the Administration; the loss of 23 representatives (Republicans and Democrats) who voted for the Foreign Language bill last year; and a general mood that the budget must be reduced, makes the future of any of these programs uncertain.

On the positive side of the ledger, the Administration has requested continued funding at $100 Million for fiscal year 1986, for Title II of the Education for Economic Security Act, although excellence in Education and Magnet School assistance will be eliminated. Exchanges are to receive a $28 Million increase. Humphrey fellows, private sector programs and the Congress-Bundestag Exchange Program all receive slight increases. This is consistent with the Pell amendment passed in 1982 insisting that exchanges be doubled over the next four years. So as we approach the end of the funding cycle in 1986, we can anticipate a leveling off in funding for exchanges in the second year of the 99th Congress, if not sooner, since a number of senators are nervous about reducing or eliminating some education programs while increasing exchanges by 25 percent.

We can also anticipate that the budget debate will pretty well occupy Congress' attention for the next few months. After that, they may begin to seriously address reauthorizaiton of the Higher Education Act which expires this year, although there is an automatic extension through next year. Consequently, Title VI, International Education and Foreign Languages, along with the rest of the Higher Education Act, must be addressed in the 99th Congress and I would not be surprised to see this as the only major education issue addressed by this congress. This legislation is particularly important to this audience in that it is all that is left of the old NDEA provisions for Language and International studies, and part B of this legislation provides funds for International Business study.

A number of members of Congress have begun to draft their proposals for Title VI; Professos Lambert's Subcommittee of the National Advisory Board has held hearings and drafted its proposals; a taskforce exists in the Higher Education community which has met a number of times and has its suggestions pretty well in place; and the language profession has offered its

suggestions to the Lambert subcommittee, interested legislators, and anyone else who will listen. All of these sources appear to be in agreement in recommending that the importance of language study be strengthened in this legislation. In fact, it appears that we will all recommend the creation of language institutes as a new provision in Title VI. My sense is that we have our act pretty well together on Title VI, and while we may have some disagreements, we are not so discordant as to have Congress decide "There they go again" and proceed to make decisions for us. Also, with regard to the total reauthorization package, Title V, Teacher Training, is quite important as well. Given the Language Profession's concern with teacher shortages, proficiency standards and some real questions about quality raised by the shortages, we will be very concerned that any new provisions for teacher training include options for quality pre-service and in-service language programs.

Finally, while JNCL has a major commitment to the foreign language bill and the ADEA, it may also be wise to look at ways to improve legislation already in place. New legislation that will have the greatest chance of becoming public law in the ninety-ninth Congress will be legislation without price tags such as Congressman Panetts's Bureau of Language Services Bill, combining and upgrading the translation and interpretation services already in existence, or Senator Simon's amendment to the U.S. Tax-code providing extra points on the civil service exam for individuals with language skills. In truth, I anticipate that the major improvements in the next two years will come in the States. If we can protect the programs created or upgraded by the ninety-eightth Congress; preserve language and exchange funding at current levels; get the Higher Education Act reauthorized with a strong Title VI; and keep the current favorable public mood toward language study alive, we will have done very well in the policy arena. Our challenge is to avoid being relegated to a back burner, and if we stay on a front burner, to be sure it's turned on.